

RENOIR

Sculptor

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Sculptor

PAUL HAESAERTS

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Sculptor

REYNAL & HITCHCOCK
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TO PIERRE, JEAN AND CLAUDE RENOIR







WHEN Renoir, as draftsman, colorist, inventor, establishes the structure of a painting and develops its theme, this master of the distribution of light seems to think in terms of *v a l u e s* (notwithstanding the fact that his shadows are light) rather than of the interaction of tones, of *v o l u m e s* rather than of arabesques, of the relations of *m a s s e s* rather than of surfaces.

His singing is a chant in the round, in periods which swell and diminish, which draw near and flee. He is a painter-sculptor. Even his decoration, when exceptionally, he adds decoration, is in its essence not two- but three-dimensional. „In a painting of Renoir,” says Raymond Cogniat, „the subject is composed and placed in space as a sculpture : the artist seems to go all around the object to find its truth, he gives it its real form, without taking the accessory details of place or clothing into account.”

If Renoir the painter sculptured in color so well as to deceive the eye, he dreamed nonetheless of one day giving shape to clay, to stone, to metal - of working in the substance, the very flesh, of space. His whole life

long he pondered the idea of working in sculpture, not as a painter but in its specific media and idioms : his interest in sculpture never left him. Day by day and decade by decade, however, he was held prisoner by his passion for painting, and put off the other dream, the realization of which came only very late, when his strength was gone and he was close to the end of his life. In the ensemble of his work, sculpture was only a passing occupation, almost a mere amusement.

Nevertheless, what little sculpture Renoir has left us is unquestionably among the best, the most intense, the most specifically sculptural work which French statuary art has produced. Brief as it is, this last song is one of sovereign breadth and volume.

The artist, the art lover, and the critic are confronted with a problem entitled „Renoir sculpture,” a problem which is important, though as yet scarcely recognized, because it reopens the whole question of sculpture itself. To what degree was Renoir himself the author of his bas-reliefs and statues ? What was his assistants' contribution to them ? How was the junction between conception and execution made ? Can the artist work

through intermediaries? To what degree is sculpture the product of the tactile faculties, and to what degree is it the „exemplary cause,” issuing from the mind of the artist? Can the hand of an artist who is following the concept of another be a perfect instrument in the service of the thought, the æsthetic conception, the sensitiveness of the master and guide? Light may be thrown on each of these questions by the answers given to the others.

The thing we must do is unravel the facts. Recent as they are, the facts have already been distorted by legends born of incomplete information and of the organized defense of material and other interests. False interpretations were possible mainly because Renoir's activity as a sculptor has never been considered as a whole, in all its aspects at once. His paintings are so numerous, and form an ensemble so imposing, that they seem to have absorbed the entire attention of the exegetes. His sculpture has been relegated to almost total oblivion.

Yet this art asks and deserves to be judged on the basis of knowledge, knowledge of the preliminaries, the vicissitudes, and the consequences of its little romance. For its story is indeed a romance, involving a fragile and fruitful artistic „conjuncture,” a romance with its ordinary, everyday side and its core of profound motivations. In it appear a number of picturesque characters whom we must get to know; for consciously or not, thanks to or in spite of their good or bad intentions, they were the instruments of the best art, the best French spirit, and the highest Mediterranean tradition.

RENOIR'S VIGOR IN HIS OLD AGE —

With the exception of a very few earlier attempts, Renoir devoted himself to sculpture on the eve and at the beginning of the war of 1914-1918, in other words between his seventy-third and seventy-fifth years. At that time he was not only an old man but a helpless paralytic. He was carried from his bed (where often enough he needed a cage to keep the bedclothes from touching his aching limbs) either in a sedan chair or in a wheelchair. His body was almost mummified.

Not only was he deprived of the use of his legs, but his hands were stiffened and shriveled. To allow him to paint, a brush was fixed between his rigidly curled fingers; thenceforth the work was done by arm movements, not by those of the hand and fingers. It was a painful and moving sight. One saw a body which was no longer much more than a skeleton wrapped in limp, baggy clothing, and protected by shawls and scarves and a vizored cap. But the lips were still full, the eyes fine. The rare, thick hairs of the beard, stiff as blades of glass, were planted in the flesh of the cheeks as wheat stalks, bleached by the sun, would be planted in a marble earth. Sitting in his invalid's chair, he was like a stricken, featherless condor, a seer with vision made keener by pain.



Yet in this wonderful old ruin, this dead and precious wood, a sap of prodigious vitality circulated, like a cool stream among heat-blistered rocks. A splendid document, a length of film taken by Sacha Guitry, preserves the evidence of this. We see the painter fast in his armchair, handling his brush with the decision and intentness of someone firing a machine gun. Suddenly he turns and casts toward the spectator a penetrating look which comes out of his gleaming eye like an arrow from a bow. It seems that Renoir's

vitality, imprisoned in this inert body, put under such pressure, has increased and asserted itself more than ever, that his vision has grown brighter.

RENOIR THE JOYFUL — The good humor, the absurd, unfailing optimism of Renoir!... Yet sickness had stricken him with ever-increasing cruelty. In 1889 he was briefly afflicted with facial paralysis. In 1898, 1899 and 1900 he suffered a particularly painful rheumatism, which later necessitated two operations, one on the foot and the other on the knee. To move around he had to use crutches. Soon he was completely crippled and immobilized. His fingers were doubled up by advancing rheumatism, and the finger-nails sank into his palms. His good humor, however, remained intact. He never stopped smiling at life, continued to be ecstatic before it. Despite his lamentable condition, and to the great surprise of those who were inclined to commiserate him, he went so far as to declare, „All told, I'm a lucky fellow!" He counted himself fortunate to be able to go on with his work as a painter, and to realize his dream of working in sculpture, even through intermediaries. He was a lucky fellow because, with all his misfortunes, he had not been forced (although this seemed inevitable) to renounce what was perhaps most precious to him in life: artistic creation.



He rebelled against any appearance of downheartedness or despondency. He allowed himself no complaint.

When his wife died and God knows he was attached to her he would not permit his household to put on mourning. No one around him was to stop wearing colors, and he wanted bouquets of flowers to make the house cheerful as before. In every circumstance he was suspicious of sadness, even before it declared itself, and he strove to exclude it. Pushed to this degree, the acceptance of joy becomes a kind of heroism.

This ardent spirit seemed to be beyond the reach of all physical ills, and even, one would think, of moral suffering. Gravely ill as he was from his forty-eighth year, Renoir was the inexhaustible singer of all that is healthy and fresh: of smiling faces and sunny landscapes, of good cheer and the pleasure of living, of children and flowers, of blooming, smiling women, of limpid air and water. This crooked, desiccated man was the author of the most generously rounded forms which painting has produced: rounds of the arms and breasts and buttocks, of fingers and lips, of hills and trees and flowers. His own constitution and that of his models, or that of his art in general, were in perfect contrast; they were opposite and complementary. In the human soul, in life, in his tones, in his subjects, he refused to see or to evoke any suggestion of shadow, evil, ugliness, sickness, or night. So doing, he drew limits for himself which one may accept with joy or with regret. But the fact remains that his happy turn of mind, his chosen attitude of serene gaiety, gave his works — including the last ones and therefore the sculpture — an always recognizable cast, a characteristic note, a special mark of youth, of opulence without gaudiness, of unalterable confidence.

ESSOYES AND CAGNES — Renoir did his sculpture at Essoyes, southeast of Troyes in Champagne, and at Cagnes in Provence. To a much less degree he worked in Paris, where he went during the summer, in his apartment in the Boulevard Rochechouart, close by the Cirque Médrano.

It was in 1885 that Renoir, who could hardly be called a traveler but who throughout his life was a nomad over the face of his *douce France*, began to

spend his summers at Essoyes, his wife's birthplace. In 1896 he bought a house there, surrounded by a garden at the end of which was a building, later used as a sculpture studio. The house itself was a peasant dwelling built of rough stone, which Renoir arranged in accordance with his simple tastes. He received a friendly welcome from the population of the village, who appreciated his openness and his joyous temperament.

The painter's health (a serious bronchitis had almost carried him off in 1882, and had dangerously weakened his respiratory organs) compelled him to pass the winter in the Midi. There too, at Cagnes, facing the sea, Renoir bought a place called *Les Collettes*.



He decided to buy not so much to have a place to live in as to prevent the clearing away of the splendid, thousand-year-old olive trees with which the land was covered. Renoir was furious at such vandalism. There was no building on the land except a charming gardener's cottage, with green shutters and a wooden balcony, which was too small to shelter a numerous household and to receive the friends and visitors who came - for Renoir loved company - almost every day. Later on, this chalet became a storage place for garden and sculpture materials and tools, and a large house was built facing the sea : the construction followed

Madame Renoir's housewifely ideas, and great care was taken „not to massacre the landscape,” to use the new proprietor's own expression. „In this marvelous country,” Renoir once said, „it seems that nothing untoward can touch you ; you live in a quilted atmosphere.”

In all the provincial communities where Renoir sojourned - and even before Essoyes and Cagnes he had set up his easel in a number of different places - he knew how to live, like the trees he took under his protection and the natives with whom he made friends, in perfect harmony with nature, with the local humor, with the air and the soil. From the beginning, his art expresses this fraternization, if only by its complete naturalness, its easy manner, the calm of spirit and fluidity of technique which are proper to it, and which speak abundantly of general concord, of universal interpenetration.

THE ART DEALERS — For long years Renoir, the child of a family of poor artisans, had struggled against the worst material difficulties. In the course of his life this situation was completely reversed. In his old age, without wishing it or letting it change the modesty of his mode of living, he became the favorite of the art market, the most sought after of living painters, the one whose works brought the fattest prices. The art dealers prowled incessantly around the places where he lived, whether in Paris, in Cagnes, or in Essoyes. It was the usual ambiguous spectacle which surrounds glory : prices and adulation outbidding each other, intrigues, real and simulated friendships, flattery, protestations of respect, whatever might serve to get hold of anything at all, a bone or a masterpiece, out of the „merchandise” which the old master produced in the facility of joy, and which was in such great demand. As soon as it came from the studio, this precious merchandise became the object of the most extravagant speculation.

One of these eager merchants, in his impatience to further his business, brought Renoir's attention to sculpture, and thus made him realize a part of the plan

which had so long been his dream. This man was Ambroise Vollard, a Frenchman from Martinique, who was made famous by the portraits which his painter friends made of him - a sort of colossus with a keen mind, a probing eye, an oblong skull, and enormous hands. There were two characters in Vollard: a man of taste and lover of art, and a sharp businessman who never lost sight of his interests. He succeeded better than any of his confrères, because he was both more of a connoisseur and a shrewder bargainer than any of them.



Wholeheartedly, by taste and by a deepseated need, he went after the friendship of painters, got on a footing of intimacy with them, studied them, followed and flattered their idiosyncrasies, made discreet suggestions as to works they might execute ; and finally, by saying the right word at the right time, he attained his end, which was to provoke the creation of works of quality for which he would be the dealer. Business matters were treated in passing and as if he were doing a favor, which often enough was the fact : more than once Vollard aided the artists to whom he had attached himself, and on whom he did not fail to make a good return.

Vollard's outstanding quality was his „flair.” He sniffed out talent wherever it existed. Thus he went straight to the best that his period produced. He ran to earth and then „canonized” worthwhile talents, though they might be unknown or unacknowledged. He attached himself to Degas, Renoir, Cézanne, Lautrec, Whistler, Sisley, Gauguin, Denis, Rousseau, Maillol, Vuillard, Bonnard, Rouault, Derain, Matisse, Picasso, Modigliani, Chagall, Dufy, Segonzac, and to them only - only to what was of the best quality - oftentimes when these artists were far from being appreciated, or were definitely on the sidewalk. Thanks to a manner all his own, amiable, nonchalant, witty (he told a story with brevity and piquancy), he made his way into the most tightly closed studios, and persuaded the painters he admired to undertake certain works which were in the line of their talent, to turn their hands, as the occasion demanded, to pottery or sculpture or engraving or etching. Once he had gained their confidence, his method consisted in bringing them whatever material was necessary, giving them a couple of words of explanation, then clearing out and letting temptation do its work. In this way he made himself the publisher of an admirable series of volumes, illustrated by his favorite artists, which number among the choicest products of French bookmaking. Some of those with whom he worked were unreserved in their admiration for his discriminating taste as a book technician. Chagall expressed his opinion to André Warnod : „You know his method. He built a book as he would a monument. Time was of no importance.... It was he who led me to the making of books, to engraving, and for twenty years I worked only for him.... You know how he loved perfection, how he detested shoddy work. This was my great reason for working for him with all my heart and never giving anything to any other publisher.”

The books of which Chagall speaks (Gogol's *Les Ames Mortes*, La Fontaine's *Fables*, the Bible) were prepared with such care that, although a considerable part of each was printed, they are not finished even today, and Vollard died without seeing them published.

At times taking to the pen himself / an alert, incisive, informal pen / Vollard wrote his memoirs in an engaging style. He treated art criticism in a way proper to himself, making the artist speak, stringing together a series of savory anecdotes which revealed the talent and personality which they evoked. From this activity came three particularly welcome volumes : a P a u l C é z a n n e , an A u g u s t e R e n o i r , and an E d g a r D e g a s .

By his better qualities / the extreme sureness of his taste, the fineness of his smile, his love of what was natural and subtle, his sense of humor and measure, his instinctive predilection for what was at once new and traditional, great and simple / Vollard stands out as a Frenchman of quality, as one who launched and almost created the best art of his era, which, in France, stretched from the Impressionists to the Nabis and the Fauves. He is the perfect spectator, who, with delicacy, encourages the artist to make the effort required to bring out the best and the most individual of himself.

When novice art dealers asked him how to get ahead, Vollard used to answer, „Sleep a lot.” Speaking of his „undefeatable propensity for falling asleep,” he explained: „Many a time a buyer coming into my shop found me dozing there. I listened to him still half asleep, wagging and bobbing my head in a painful effort to answer him. Taking my unintelligible bumbling for a refusal, the customer progressively increased his offer. Thus, by the time I was more or less wide awake, my picture had gone up appreciably in price.” We need not doubt that he knew quite well what he was doing when he went to sleep, and that he slept with one eye open. Anyway, his merchant’s eye, even half-closed, could see farther than the open, staring ones of most of his colleagues.

From a material point of view he had more success than he could possibly have hoped for. Consequently he was envied, and at times, perhaps not without good reason, spurned and suspected. Certain of his judges viewed him with the utmost severity. „Renoir,” says Georges Duthuit, „had no aversion to art dealers, since they spared him a certain number of amateurs. One of them has profited hugely by his tolerance. This is

Monsieur Vollard, who, more fortunate in this than the gadfly on the horse or the paralyzing wasp, can feed first, as a seller of painting, on the living bodies of great men, and, as a writer, fatten himself later on their corpses.”



Gaston Poulain, seeing him „spacious, black and silvered,” compares him to a hearse. And he adds : „I could not tell whether this imposing creation contained a cadaver. All I remember is that stories of dead men named Cézanne, Renoir, Meissonier were exhaled from it / stories, flavorful at times, which he wrote (or had written for him), and which in any case were published under his name with well-deserved success.” Edmond Jaloux once wrote, rather naïvely : „The fact that M. Maillol was able to subsist at all for a number of years was due especially to the generosity and intelligence of M. Ambroise Vollard.” But Vollard, while no doubt not so basely calculating and voracious as it amuses Duthuit to describe him, always felt ill at ease when his disinterestedness was extolled. We should not forget that Vollard’s conscience was burdened with such acts as those revealed in the trial at which his heirs came to grips with Rouault / on the one hand the starvation wage received by the artist, and on the other the fabulous „margin of profit” which the dealer allotted to himself. In the light of this, it is understandable that Vollard, confronted with Jaloux’s statement, was to some extent disturbed, and that he wrote : „Naturally I was very flattered to find you using the word i n t e l l i g e n c e in reference to me. However,

I am bothered by the certificate of generosity which you award me at the same time. To speak of generosity in the relations of a dealer with an artist is, it seems to me, a little like saying that in buying land in which he hopes to find gold, the purchaser shows generosity toward the seller.... Accustomed, as is any writer of your authority, to analyze personal feelings, you will understand the scruple which prompted me to write this letter." Vollard saw his position clearly, and could talk about it with delicacy and irony.

Renoir's decision to express himself in sculpture we owe quite clearly to Vollard - to his taste as the perfect initiate, to his dogged persistence as a businessman, and to the deftness of his touch in his relations with artists. We have seen that all his life the painter wanted to try his hand at statuary. But being on in years and in bad health, when he is urged to take up the chisel he can only protest, feeling within him the burn of forced renunciation. Vollard, however, who had the run of the house so far as the patriarch of Cagnes was concerned, and who could arm himself with patience when the success of one of his maneuvers was at stake, lay obstinately in wait. He tells us that when he heard his painter friend go into ecstasies before a model and become excited at the thought of the statue he might make of her, he did not fail to fan this enthusiasm. The logical and disappointing reply was not long in coming: „Look here, Vollard, you know very well that I hardly have any hands left...." But a couple of minutes later, having thought the matter over, the painter, with his indestructible optimism, would add: „The way I am now, I might succeed in modeling a small head...." But then he immediately recalled that his great desire had always been to work in large figures. Vollard said nothing, „fell asleep" as he says, and went home, mulling over the thoughts of a man who knows art, men, and business arrangements. Sculpture by Renoir! How fine that could be! What a novelty! What choice merchandise to offer to the prospective buyer! And no doubt he would be able to exclude any other dealers. The taste for sculpture lived in Renoir; if his hands were almost powerless, his passion

was intact. Out of the enthusiasm of such an artist, first-class works would necessarily be born. Those cursed paralyzed hands, the only obstacle in the way of realizing this alluring project, were they really an insurmountable hindrance? Couldn't young and lively hands be lent to Renoir, and couldn't he, with his exacerbated passion augmented by forced immobility, inspire and lead these hands? Vollard became more and more intrigued by his idea, and already saw the means of carrying it out.

MAILLOL, ADMIRER OF RENOIR AND TEACHER OF GUINO — Aristide Maillol was one of the men on whom Vollard gambled and with whom he was in frequent contact. A painter who at the age of forty had turned to sculpture, he was twenty years younger than Renoir, and was working at Banyuls, a small fishing village near the Spanish border, at the other end of the same French coast where the old master resided.



Claude Roger-Marx has said of Maillol that he „discovered Greece when he passed through the studio at Cagnes." Maillol is Renoir working with a chisel. „If I had continued to paint," he says of himself,

„I would have let myself be influenced by Renoir. I did some small canvases which resemble his.” He might have added : „And since then I have done sculptures which are almost Renoirs in the round.” To Louis Morel, a young sculptor who was to work for Renoir later, Maillol gave the following advice : „Look at Renoir’s nudes : that’s real sculpture. You don’t need to look elsewhere.”

There were profound affinities between the two men, the painter and the sculptor. Mutual esteem drew them together and created a reciprocal bond of friendship. Here is how Renoir described his first meeting with Maillol to Vollard : „Jeanne Baudot said to me one day : „I’m going to show you something you’ll like.’ We went to Marly, near Versailles, where we found Maillol working on a statue in his garden. He was cutting away the form without pointing ; it was the first time I saw that done. Others imagine that they approach the antique by copying it ; but Maillol, without borrowing anything from the ancients, is so much their child that, seeing his stone come, I looked around me for olive trees.... I thought I had been transported to Greece.” Is not such an admirer himself „a child of the ancients” ? When he goes to the Midi, is it not to try to find something of the spirit and setting of the Romans and the old Greeks ?

Renoir bought from Maillol a ceramic piece, which was not really, although it has been so described, a „fountain” intended for the garden at Cagnes, but a hand basin, prettily worked and surmounted by a statuette. Renoir was mad about it, but the piece was not practical and was never used. In 1908, still interested in the work of his young fellow artist, Renoir painted a portrait of Vollard, leaning on a table and holding a statuette by Maillol. During the summer of the same year, while he was at Essoyes, he received Maillol in his home and had him execute a portrait, a head in the full round, concerning which Georges Rivière says that the first version, accidentally destroyed (it was badly braced and moistened too much, and collapsed, flattening the nose and the contours of the face), was more „artistic” than the second, which survived.

Renoir and Maillol were made to understand each other. They were born of the same stock. More sensorial than cerebral, working more by instinct than by calculation, they represent and continue the artisanship of France, simple, conscientious, faithful to its traditions and its soil.

Vollard figured that the ideal thing would be to lend to Renoir the hands of the sculptor of Banyuls. But that was an impossible plan. Maillol was already too busy carrying on his own work, and besides, his manner was already fixed : any work of Maillol would thenceforth be Maillol. But the real solution was not far to seek : it would be to employ a technician whose mind and hand had been guided by someone who, like him, was rooted in the purest sculptural tradition of France. If only it could be a pupil of Maillol himself ! Such a one would already be familiar with the aesthetic ideas of the painter of Essoyes and Cagnes ; he would have acquired the science of volumes from the artist who called himself the spiritual son of Renoir, and whom Renoir for his part considered the most remarkable sculptor of his time. The hands of a brilliant pupil of Maillol were the ones which should be able to replace the lifeless hands of the old, enfeebled master. There was such a man : he was the young sculptor called Richard Guino. He had been working since 1910 in Maillol’s studios in Paris and Marly-le-Roi. Maillol, being consulted, praised to Vollard the dexterity of his young assistant, who did his pointing and roughing-out ; he declared categorically that of all his pupils, who in fact were few in number, Guino was best suited to the work in prospect. Guino was called in immediately by Vollard, who presented him to Renoir, hired him at his own expense, and put him at the disposal of the paralytic, who at first was somewhat surprised and hesitant about the arrangement.

RICHARD GUINO — Who was Guino ? A young man twenty-three years old when Vollard engaged him in 1913. He was born in Catalonia, May 26, 1890. His Spanish origin (he later became a French citizen) makes him, like the other protagonists of the





sculpture which was about to be created, a participant of the Greco-Latin and Mediterranean spirit. In Montmartre he attended the Académie Ranson, conducted by the widow of the Nabi painter Paul Ranson, in which old friends of the artist were professors : Paul Sérusier, Maurice Denis and Félix Valotton, among others, taught painting there, and Aristide Maillol taught sculpture. The latter's lessons made a particular impression on Guino, and a happy choice - he took Maillol subsequently as his guide and source of inspiration, especially in all matters relating to technique. Rather short of stature, with bold features, lively brown eyes, a mouth at once prominent and rather flattened, thick, black, unruly hair, Richard Guino was a vigorous, enterprising person, with a keen, receptive and untrammelled mind. Active and clever, he could change his method according to the work to be done, and could carry the work forward speedily or slowly, as the case demanded. His style, before and after his meeting with Renoir, was not very fixed ; it might be said that he did not have a style of his own. He had tried his hand at a number of techniques, had worked in a great variety of clays, woods, stones, and marbles, had done ceramic, enamel, majolica, had made and decorated plates, vases and bibelots. Being able to assimilate different genres, he was as good at sharp, hieratic forms (seemingly a reminiscence of the Nabi aesthetic) as at softer, almost sugary lines. His best personal works are decoratively mannered, elegantly finished nudes with varied and interesting attributes - baskets, nosegays and crowns of flowers, garlands, palms, bunches of fruit. François Fosca says of him that his dominant quality is *v a r i e t y*. „No doubt,” he adds, „there are more important qualities than that ; and there have been great masters who lacked it. But perhaps we have not usually given variety enough importance. When an artist presents us, as Guino does, not only with plasters but with terra cottas, some of them enhanced with color or gold, with carved woods, decorative bas-reliefs, faïences and frescoes, he proves that he has curiosity of mind, a lively taste for various manners, the desire to renew himself - things for which he cannot be overpraised. In a period when the *a r t i s a n* side

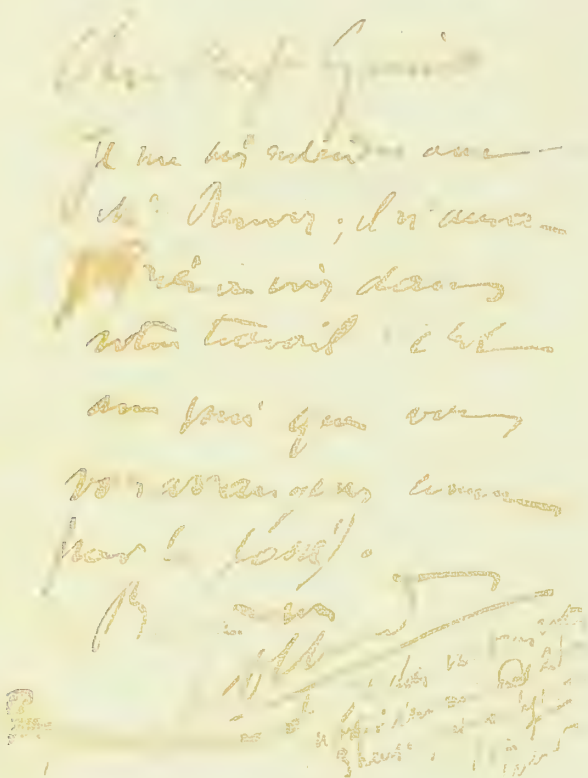
of art is not only neglected but deliberately despised, such qualities are noteworthy. And the more so because Guino does not stop there : these qualities are not isolated in his work, but are under the command of a lyric temperament which aims first of all to bring out the beauties of the human body, to render an ideal of grace and beauty.”

Fosca's view was exact : variety, dexterity, technical knowledge, enthusiasm, these are the qualities which characterize Guino, and not a fundamental originality nor some relentless attachment to a conception which, in ripening, would have developed and taken precise form. Clever and unstable as he is, he sometimes disturbs us. Spurred by material needs, having a numerous family to support, he does not always avoid hasty and banal work, slipping at times into what could be called the commonplaces of French decorative art, favored by a clientèle with fixed ideas, lacking understanding of true artistic creativeness. But Guino's very mobility, his rapid grasp, his receptivity, his surprising facility, his extraordinary power of adaptation, make him the ideal person to obey the genius of Renoir, and to stamp the clay with the incontestable imprint of this genius.

Vollard's role had not yet come to an end. He still had to persuade Renoir, whose scruples persisted, to put himself seriously to work. It was not easy. Poor Renoir, perfectly aware of his condition, could do nothing but hold out his twisted, inert hands and say : „But my dear friend, don't you see the state I'm in ?” The instigator then told him that he saw Rodin „surrounded by pupils who were enlarging the figures of the master while the latter stroked his beard.” Renoir, intrigued, is said to have replied : „You remind me of a print called *T h e L i f e o f t h e A r t i s t s o f A n t i q u i t y*. It showed a studio where the assistants were attacking the stone, with mallet and chisel in hand. One character was reclining on a bed, a crown of roses on his brow : this was the sculptor !” The painter's entourage could not help being annoyed by Vollard's importunity. It was noted with displeasure that this stubborn merchant always had his way by

tiring out his victim ; the beat of his big feet sometimes resounded heavily through the house. As for Renoir, if he dreaded this manager whom he did not retain, and who very often pressed him too closely, he nevertheless had a real affection for him, and took pleasure in their discussions of painting.

All told, his feelings toward Vollard were mixed ; and he gave them frank expression when he called him „my dear busybody.” There is a drawing by Renoir, a self-portrait, dated 1916 and dedicated „to Vollard, my beloved bore.”



Finally, caught in the trap, but acting so to speak for his own amusement (he always worked for pleasure, and considered that this was the secret of good work), Renoir put Guino to work and began to find this new activity to his taste. The game was won. A fecund collaboration was launched - fecund not so much for the quantity of pieces which it produced, but for the exceptional quality of a certain number of them. Renoir discovered in Guino a perfect technician, who carried out his ideas carefully and with an open mind ; and the easily influenced Guino, who liked and admired Renoir, found in the old man a guide who was sure and rich with a long artistic experience, and who from the beginning freed him from his perpetual hesitancy.

RENOIR'S IDEAS ON SCULPTURE —

Let us now turn back to look for the symptoms of Renoir's renewed interest in sculpture. While still in his adolescence, he already felt drawn to this form of art. He tells us that while he was an apprentice porcelain painter he took an interest, during the noonday break, in the statues which he found in the streets and squares : „Thus, one day when I was in the vicinity of the Halles, looking for one of those wine shops where beef and chips are served, I halted, carried away with delight, before the Fontaine des Innocents, by Jean Goujon, which I had not known before. I gave up the ‚bistro’ immediately, bought a bit of sausage from the nearest delicatessen shop, and spent my hour of liberty walking around the fountain, viewing it from all sides.”

„When I was a youngster,” he tells Albert André, „I often went into the sculpture galleries of the Louvre, hardly knowing why.... I stayed there for hours, day-dreaming....” It would seem that Renoir's sculpture was a belated realization of a youthful dream, as is so often the case in artistic undertakings. In later years, when he was painting, Renoir always thought to some extent as a sculptor. His epigram, „When I have painted a buttock and feel like giving it a pat, I know it's finished,” is a sculptor's epigram.

In his canvases he strove for the calm and density of the sculpture of the great periods. „When I see the statues in the Luxembourg, too white and too agitated as they are, I want to run away....”

He was pleased with Jean Goujon's strict style : „What purity, what simplicity, what elegance, and at the same time what solidity in the matter ! The marbles of today look as if they were carved out of soap....” He also liked the reticence and hidden power of the medieval stonecutters. „Among all the master-pieces of the Cathedral of Rheims, there are three exceptional figures : the Christian Religion, the Queen of Saba and the Smile of Rheims. Their beauty is maddening ! It's when one sees things like these that one realizes fully the sad state of modern sculpture, and above all its inanity. Look, for instance, at the horses on the Grand Palais,









VIII



IX

each one pulling in his own direction.... Crazy horses ! That's where you'd like to see a bomb land, but no such luck !"

He had a horror of gesticulation. Thus he preferred Donatello to Michelangelo, at whose expense he coined a jest, although he acknowledged his genius : „He had studied anatomy too much ; he was so afraid of leaving out the smallest muscle that he put in some which must at times cause his characters a good deal of embarrassment." He was even suspicious of his friend Rodin, always, no doubt, through his mistrust of the declamatory gesture : „Our leading sculptor," he used to say, deliberately passing over the one who at the time was a sort of pope of sculpture, „is Degas, of course. I've seen a bas-relief of his which he allowed to crumble away ; it was as beautiful as an antique. And that dancer in wax.... She had a mouth, a mere indication, but what design !"

These few remarks show us that Renoir's taste, in sculpture as in everything else, was for measure, simplicity, absence of rhetoric, a living traditionalism. That is what he tried to effect, first with his own hands, and then through the able and obedient hands of his collaborators.

RENOIR'S FIRST SCULPTURES — Concerning Renoir's first steps in the domain of sculpture, Georges Rivière hands down certain facts which go back as far as 1875 : „Legrand (an employe of Durand-Ruel) was the sales representative in France of an English concern which produced ‚MacLean Cement,' a very fine plaster out of which, on the other side of the Channel, they manufactured mantelpieces to be sold in the Colonies, and a variety of imitation-marble objects ; for this white cement easily took a variety of colors.... Renoir, who always liked ceramic (colored reliefs were familiar to him : had he not been a porcelain painter ?), thought that more varied use could be made of so good-looking a plastic material than the English made of it.... He experimented with the cement in several kinds of painted and relief decoration. Among other things, he modeled for Madame Charpentier's

salon a mirror frame in which the flowers, in the eighteenth-century manner, were painted in very pretty, delicate shades. He also painted, after me, a head which then was fired, like faïence. After more than forty years the color shows no change."

Renoir, wholly absorbed by his discovery of light painting, did not pursue these first attempts, which were rather the work of an artisan and decorator than that of a sculptor. It was not until 1907 that he took up modeling again. Meanwhile three sons had been born to him : Pierre, famous today as a stage and cinema actor, Jean, now one of the leading cinema producers in France, and Claude, nicknamed „Coco" in childhood, whose presence, Roger Marx tells us, gladdened the artist's mature years. All three were models for their father at one time or another, and Coco was his inspiration for a medallion and a head in sculpture.



The medallion, which is only 8 1/2 inches (22 cm.) in diameter, was undertaken in 1907, and was intended to decorate the fireplace of the dining room in Cagnes, where it was set in when finished. Its outline is irregular, conforming with Renoir's ideas on the virtues of what he calls „irregularism" (he left an essay on this subject). Perhaps the motif, a child's head seen in profile, was suggested to Renoir by another portrait of Coco, also oval in shape, and painted some four years previously.

The spirit of the two pieces, however, is entirely different. The bas-relief is primitive in appearance (Chaldean, Cretan, Etruscan), and with perfect naturalness, avoiding any neo-primitivism, attains the style of the ancient medals, Roman and Byzantine. Concerning the manner in which this modest work is treated, Maillol's remark to Judith Cladel bears repetition. He said that Renoir worked on the medallion as if nothing of the kind had existed before, as if he had never learned anything, as if he were the first man who had ever done sculpture.

The Head of Coco, executed some months later, is a sphere to which the hair, cut in bangs, the eyes, the nose, the full-lipped mouth, are attached easily, without disturbing the general structure of the mass. This is genuine sculpture in the round, sculptor's sculpture at one stroke, not treated by juxtaposed silhouettes but carved in space. Renoir, no doubt obeying a habit of his hand which had become mechanical, gave his son the very special profile, with the uptipped nose, the outthrust upper lip, the half-open mouth, the receding chin, which he gave to the subjects of all his portraits; in spite of which, although one would never expect it, he always achieved a likeness. These two sculptures, the medallion and the bust, are the only ones which Renoir executed entirely with his own hands, which even at that time were partially paralyzed. But soon his whole attention was again absorbed with painting. When he wanted to go back to modeling, three or four years later, his hands were entirely rigid. But he had had the experience of direct contact with the material, and knew how far it obeyed, how far it aided, and how far it resisted the working of the artist.

THE COLLABORATION OF RENOIR AND GUINO — Before we go on to examine the sculptures which Renoir executed using Guino's hands in place of his own, we must take a stand on the controversial questions raised by this artistic collaboration. It was foreordained that this controversy would arise. The respective contributions of the „con-

ceiver" and the „realizer" would at times be contested and at times exaggerated, according to the interests at stake, the interpretation of the facts, the sources of information, and the different possible conceptions regarding the process of artistic creation.



It is difficult, moreover, to gauge the degree of realization which the conception already contains, as it is difficult to determine how far a good technique depends on an initial coherent vision. If a valid idea fashions the work of art ahead of time, it is equally true that a valid act of fashioning is simply the prolongation of the thought, so much so that the separation of the two phases is illusory. So we are faced with an illusion, but an illusion which really existed. Between Renoir and Guino there must have been an understanding that was little short of miraculous, a real communication of thought and act, Renoir assimilating Guino's technique and imagining his future „realizations" in terms of that technique, Guino carrying Renoir's intentions in himself and acting in accordance with their commands. How fragile must have been the harmony which presided over their successes! Small wonder if it was ephemeral.

The fundamental unity of the result – rare even in the case of a single artist – makes it difficult to believe in this double intervention. One would attribute the whole work to Renoir without hesitation if it were not known with certainty that when the works were executed he was immobilized. Or else, still in search of unity, one would attribute the whole to Guino were it not for the fact that in style, in spirit, in essence and in form it is the art, not of Richard Guino, but of Pierre-Auguste Renoir.

Since this equilibrium was so precarious, all sorts of misunderstandings were possible the minute it was disturbed. Vollard knew this, and in order to further his own game began by mixing up the cards. He maneuvered in such a way as to have the exclusive right to sell these sculptures; he made himself practically their sole proprietor, or at the very least their „publisher.”



Thereafter it was in his interest to create the impression that the works he was holding and selling were by Renoir alone. He never mentioned the dreaded name of Guino (the „assistant,” he called him, and changed the subject). He spoke freely of several „executants” whose intervention, he implied, was quite as important as Guino’s. There were other executants, but their role was insignificant, whereas Guino’s contribution was a capital, a determining factor.

The painter’s eldest son, Pierre Renoir, disagrees with any such reduction of the role of his father’s collaborator. In an interview published in *Figaro* on

October 23, 1934, in answer to André Warnod, who had said to him, „I know that subsequently he [Auguste Renoir] took on an assistant,” Pierre Renoir declared: „That is not quite the fact: when my father wished to go back to sculpture he no longer had the entirely free use of his hands. Guino, a young Catalan sculptor, had very happily translated into sculpture a nude painted by my father. At once there was established between the young artist and the old master a communion complete enough to make working together possible. Renoir, with a pointer in hand, guided Guino, and they understood each other so well that my father rarely had to say a word. An indication with the pointer, a grunt of approval or disapproval, and things went along smoothly.”

For his part, Georges Rivière, in his book *Renoir et ses amis*, does not hesitate to use the word „collaboration.” „It was at *Les Collettes*,” he says, „that Renoir tried sculpture, using the aid of a talented young artist who, with a remarkable understanding of the painter’s mind, transposed the latter’s treatment without altering it. Never did collaboration give better results than in the case of Renoir and Guino.”

If Guino is described as a sculptor’s assistant, or pointer, one would almost have to speak of him, in the specific instance of his collaboration with Renoir, as an assistant endowed with genius. In carrying out the plan of obeying the intentions of a master, he far surpassed anything that could have been expected of him.

Vollard narrates: „I remember the day I saw Renoir, under the big linden in the garden, with a long pointer in his hand, dictating the volumes of his *Venus Victorious* to his assistant.” Here as elsewhere he obviously wishes to convey the idea (this is why he uses the word „dictate”) that Guino did not make a move which was not directly inspired by Renoir, much the way a grown person helps a child to write by holding his hand.

Anyone can see that in fact such a method is impractical, in the sense that nothing but dead works could come of it. The Renoir-Guino sculptures, on the contrary, are full of life, executed under the impulsion

of a forceful inspiration ; the technique is vital, quick, lyrical. No one who knows the inner, personal tension which the execution of such animated art presupposes, and the strenuous material effort which is involved, will put any stock in the wand dictating word-for-word (a method which obviously would destroy any initiative in the executant). We imagine, engaged in the production of such statues, an energetic, tense, absorbed man, stepping back, coming forward again, in contact with a central, controlling idea, which may have been suggested to him, but which, at the moment of the elaboration, lives in him and leads him. At that moment the creative act is less divisible than ever, and any intervention from without could only disturb, if not block, the execution. Even materially it is almost impossible that Renoir could have been there, nailed to his chair, harassing the movements of his collaborator, hindering the activity of fingers and modeling tools with his pointer.

There was, of course, a pointer, but it was not in constant use ; in general it came into play only when the work in course was presented to the master, and then only to punctuate his remarks. It was a bamboo rod about a yard long. Renoir held it the same way he held his brushes. On this point there is a current opinion to be corrected, a legend to be destroyed. It has often been said that Renoir's brushes were attached to his hand, held firm by means of bandages. This is inexact. The brush, as well as the pointer, was held fast in the hand simply by being inserted between the paralyzed fingers. The contraction of the fingers, with their tendency to curl inward, was sufficient to give the brush or rod the necessary steadiness. The bandages (for there were bandages, made of powdered gauze) which swathed the painter's clenched hands were not used to hold his brushes, but to keep the fingernails from puncturing the flesh of his palms.

The work, therefore, must have progressed in the following manner : Renoir would choose from among his old canvases a scene or figure which could be transposed into sculpture. Certain details of the projected piece were indicated by means of a supplementary

sketch. A few of these hasty sketches have been preserved.

Guino then went off alone to make a trial model in small scale. Sometimes he employed a living model, a flower-seller from Cagnes, a young, fair-haired woman who came from Essoyes and who sometimes posed for Renoir. When this trial specimen was finished, Guino presented it to Renoir, who, with a fresh eye, studied and criticized it.

After the discussion Guino isolated himself again, usually in a room in the house which was reserved for sculpture, and worked toward turning out the piece in its final scale and dimensions. He might have recourse to the model again in this second phase of execution. When to Guino's mind the work was finished, Renoir was summoned, and either approved or suggested new modifications. If necessary Guino returned to the task, but generally, thanks to his intuitive and lucid comprehension of what was demanded of him, he quickly succeeded in satisfying his master and inspirer.

When all the work was done, Guino, before casting the piece, had Renoir sign it ; this, in view of the latter's condition, was sometimes difficult. Another and easier way was to have Renoir trace his signature, for instance with the handle of his brush, on a small rectangle of wax or soft plaster. This plaque was then incrustated in the piece before it was cast, usually in a hollow prepared beforehand in the base. (One of these plaques is reproduced : plate XLVIII.)

The clear vision of the old man allied itself admirably with the vigor of his young associate. Their harmonious psychological relationship, their common love of the work to be brought forth, their esteem for each other - the authority and cordiality of the one, the affection and admiration of the other - largely contributed to the success of this difficult undertaking. Assisted by a mere hack with no initiative of his own, Renoir could have done nothing, while Guino would not have been able to realize anything if he had been ruled by a fumbling, tyrannical or brutal master.

Guino possessed a prodigious dexterity, which Renoir admired completely and took pleasure in noting. He









was incensed at the public „which wishes to be assured that we have toiled over a thing before it will deign to look at it....” The Renoir-Guino sculpture was done with facility, almost off-hand ; otherwise it could not have been done at all.

RENOIR'S SCULPTURE IS AUTHENTICALLY RENOIR — Richard Guino's intervention in Renoir's sculpture is important / more important than that of a scribe to whom a writer dictates his book, that of a contractor who carries out an architect's plans, that of an actor who plays a role imagined by a playwright, or even that of a performer who plays a composer's music. None of these intermediaries between the inventor and the public shares, as was the case with Guino, in the creation itself ; if they were absent, the work with which they associate themselves and which they make known would nonetheless exist, in potency and totality. Leave Guino out, and it might be said that there would have been no Renoir sculpture. Guino was irreplaceable, or very close to it.

And yet this sculpture is Renoir's, beyond the possibility of question. The choice of subjects was Renoir's. The types and movements of the characters are Renoir's. The general style and the psychological atmosphere are Renoir's. The monumental handling and the everyday turn are Renoir's. To Renoir likewise belong the nature of the volumes, their opulence, the manner in which they are connected and grouped. And the technique is his, that supple, vibrant technique, at once easy and unobtrusively controlled. All this came straight from Renoir's thought, from his conception of art. We have here, coming from him, an action considerably deeper than that of mere supervision and a few rectifications.

Guino contributed to this only his extraordinary, his total and living submission. And that submission itself leads us back to Renoir. It must be said clearly that there is nothing in this art which in the slightest degree evokes a style proper to Guino, whereas Renoir had already sculptured as he made Guino sculpture, and as later on he tried to make Morel sculpture.

Moreover, from another point of view, when Guino returned to executing his own conceptions, there was no relation or common measure between his subsequent work and what he had done under the guidance of the master of Cagnes and Essoyes.



If perchance these works were signed with any other name than Renoir's, one would have the justified feeling that one had come upon a patent and cynical case of plagiarism. This, however, is a gratuitous hypothesis, for these are not works done „in the manner of Renoir,” but works done directly, with what was most individual and purest in his spirit. Is not Renoir's sculpture part of his most personal production ?

Guino himself felt this, and after leaving Renoir no longer used the same style and technique, although he knew its innermost secrets. He knew that he was not on his own ground ; and it is to his credit that he did not go on working in a manner which obviously was not his own.

THE SMALL VENUS AND THE VENUS VICTORIOUS —

The first work which Guino executed for Renoir was done at Essoyes, in the summer of 1913. It is a small *Standing Venus*, 24 inches (60 cm.) high. Vollard tells us: „Arriving at Renoir's, I find him with a lump of clay in front of him. „I can't resist it," he said. „I'm going to try a small figure.'”

What he made then was eventually to grow into his large *Venus Victorious*. The "small figure" here referred to was a head which he modeled with sticks of wood (he could still manipulate clay on this scale). Special casts were made of this head, which is very fine, and entirely the work of Renoir's hands. In working out the *Small Venus*, Guino copied the head, modifying it slightly in conformity with the author's wishes.

As soon as Vollard had reached a general business agreement with Renoir, he began to press Guino, and dispatched him to the master of Essoyes with a rough sketch of the projected *Venus*. Renoir immediately set about correcting this work, the initial idea of which came from one of his old drawings. He had the belly and hips made heavier and the breasts lifted, and so produced a stocky, massive little woman, all flesh, a small animal-woman with an exceptionally long torso. A finished statue in itself, this *Small Venus* became the starting point for the working out of a large statue, the *Venus Victorious*, which is larger than life, and was executed at Cagnes in 1915 and 1916.

Before setting Guino definitely to work (this detail shows his disposition to follow the ancients) Renoir wrote to his friend Albert André, asking him to go and measure the relative dimensions of a statue of a Greek woman. „Not the *Venus de Milo*," he specifies, „who is a big gendarme, but the *Venus d'Arles* or the *Venus de Medici*, for instance, or others." The statue was to be 71 inches (1 m. 80) high, base included. The work was done in a makeshift studio in the cellar of *Les Collettes*, where the lighting was rather poor. (The house was built on a slope, so that the back of the room was in darkness, while the light entered

through three windows in the front wall and one on the side. The door opened not on the garden but into an adjoining room.) They used a fairly good clay which they found in the garden. In order to show how he conceived the new expression of the head and a new movement to be given to the drapery, Renoir made a few sketches, chiefly on the cover of a catalogue. A model was placed at Guino's disposal; this was Maria, a young woman from Essoyes who also posed frequently for Renoir.



When the work in clay was well along, Renoir decided to have the statue cast in plaster. Guino, assisted by Claude Renoir, proceeded to build the piece-mold. Once the statue was molded in plaster, Renoir went back to work on it, determined to review it volume by volume, to leave no detail to chance, removing plaster in one place, adding it in another. He spared no pains: he wanted to attain perfection, wanted naturalness combined with style. He wanted his statue to be alive and free of the abstract, though on the other hand it must not, to use his own expression, „stink of the model.”

















This phase of the work is carried on in the open air, under the olive trees of the garden. Guino is admirably attentive and obedient-familiar without allowing himself any familiarities. Renoir is tense, demanding, determined to succeed ; he wields his pointer furiously at one time, delicately at another. He feels that at the end of his rod there are fingers, his own fingers with their old power restored.

The *L a r g e V e n u s* is the statue on which Renoir worked the most. It is also the only one whose surface is finished with complete precision. It is the most consummate and the most complex of his sculptures, and, better than any other, satisfies demands which are almost conflicting. It is pushed to the point of ultimate perfection, and seems improvised. It is majestic and simple, familiar, in contact with the world, and yet distant, withdrawn, as it were, into solitude.

No sooner was it finished than Vollard (who had good reason to congratulate himself on his initiative) proceeded to have it cast in bronze. Claude Renoir and Guino also tried to make a copy in cement, which Renoir wanted polychromed if it turned out well. But each of the parts, being separately molded, got somewhat out of shape, and it was not possible to fit the pieces together. Even today the cement members of the *Large Venus* - arms, legs, heads - lie scattered through the house once occupied by Renoir.

In 1919 the bronze copy was submitted to the jury for exhibition in the United States. Vollard gives an account of the episode : „Renoir told me : „Vollard, the *Triennale* is organizing an exposition for America ; they've asked me for something. Those poor folks have named me their honorary president. Would you mind having my statue of *Venus* brought to them ? ' „When I arrived at the *Grand Palais*, a guard told me that the gentlemen were busy judging the sculpture. I entered the room, where three persons were seated behind a desk. Bronzes were being weighed on a scale beside them.

„ ,Twenty-five kilograms.'

„ ,Accepted.'

„ ,Thirty-five kilograms.'

„ ,Must be revised.'

„ ,Forty kilograms.'

„ ,Rejected.'

„ ,How much does the *Renoir* weigh ? ' asked the three judges in unison.

„ ,About a hundred and seventy-five kilograms, I think.'

„ ,A hundred and seventy-five kilograms ! For one statue to be shipped to America ! ' cried one of the examiners. „Why, according to the weight limit we've set, we'd have to sacrifice five or six comrades.'

„As I started to leave, the president of the jury announced, „Well, see here, I'm taking it on myself to do an injustice. We'll go as high as seventy-five kilograms for M. Renoir.' And lifting his finger he insisted, „Above all don't tell anyone. We just sent back a *seventy-kilogrammer* by a member of the Institute ! ' "

The two *Venuses*, the small and the large, are almost identical in their general character : both have the weight resting on the right leg, the arms extended, with an apple in one hand and drapery in the other. The first, however, has a more massive and more exclusively fleshly aspect than the second ; the legs are shorter, the flesh not so firm. The drapery, which is stiff in the first version, is more animated in the second, and, in obedience to the master's sketch, shows more suppleness. The surface of the statuette is rough and shows thumb marks, while that of the larger statue is unbroken and smoothed.

The theme of the statues is *Aphrodite*, who has just triumphed over *Hera* and *Athene*, her two rivals, has been chosen by Paris, and has received from him the famous golden apple, inscribed, „Let the fairest among you take it," which was thrown by *Eris*, the goddess of discord, at the wedding feast of *Thetis* and *Peleus*. In this case Renoir has obviously taken Paris' place as judge. He did not fail to choose a winner to his own taste, a woman with rounded, sloping shoulders, a broad, heavy pelvis, a low forehead, a partly open mouth, and eyes empty of thought - one of those „ancillary royalties," Roger-Marx said, „who make it clear that Jupiter more than once slept in servant's beds."

This time Renoir has ennobled his preferred, essentially feminine type. This time we do not have one of those Paris girls that we find in so many of his canvases, with dimpled cheeks, laughing eyes and full, smiling mouth. This is no Nini or Margot, Louison or Gabrielle, so often portrayed; not one of his round, blond girls, tomboys grown into women, some of them florists or seamstresses, others shopgirls or showgirls. This is a striking synthesis of their plump flesh, their charms, their animality; it is the incarnation in bronze of the idea of womanhood which they all evoke. The Venus is the heavy woman of Renoir's painting, of his drawings, of his long career, made into a poem of earthy heaviness, of fecundity, of unself-consciousness, and placed by the artist on a pedestal of glory to receive his supreme and ample homage.

THE SMALL AND THE LARGE JUDGMENT OF PARIS —

What Renoir had in mind was to make a monument of his *Venus Victorious*, with a pedestal which would be decorated with a relief depicting the whole scene of the contest over the apple. He had already treated this scene a number of times in pastel, pencil and oils, for when Renoir had taken up a theme which suited him and for which he had found an apt plastic interpretation, he was in no hurry to abandon it.

He began, therefore, by asking his sculptor to rough out a bas-relief which might eventually serve to ornament the base of the *Small Venus*. For this purpose he gave him, as a basic outline, the photograph of a drawing done in 1908, the same year in which he had also painted a *Judgment of Paris* in oils on canvas.

In his Paris studio Guino worked on this small plaque in low relief, rather in the style of a medal, measuring only 5 inches in height by 8 inches in width (12 x 19 cm.). The work lacks ease and accent; the central figure, particularly, is undistinguished.

But this was only the first sketch. Working from it, and referring to the photograph, Guino started another treatment of the theme, this time in high relief. He

worked on this at *Les Collettes* during the year 1918. Since the new version was to be part of the base of the *Venus Victorious*, the dimensions were enlarged to 30 by 36 inches (73 x 91 cm.). The central figure was not inspired by the corresponding figure in the small wax plaque, which had not been successful, nor from the initial drawing, but by the two Venuses already done in the round. The work has style; its composition is both lively and in accordance with a strict organization. The handsome Paris, clothed in a pleated robe, with a Phrygian bonnet on his abundant hair, kneeling almost in ecstasy, offers the apple of victory to an opulent Aphrodite. On either side of the triumphant goddess, Hera and Athene, her disappointed companions, manifest surprise and rebellion, as far as this is possible for Renoir's personages. Almost merging with the Heavens, Hermes of the winged heels, the goddesses' guide, assists at the contest, and, with his arm upraised in judgment, seems to be ratifying the verdict.

The modeling is firm. The modulations of the background, soberly suggesting the fullness of nature, emphasize and sustain the prominent figures. Obeying the rules of a varied and simple movement, several dominant lines meet and cross harmoniously. Full and empty spaces alternate exactly and flexibly. There is a softness in this work which removes it from the primitive severity and magic which give power to the Assyrian and Hittite reliefs. But the plaque is in keeping with another more recent tradition, the tradition of a pleasant, well-ordered composition, which runs from the Ghibertis and Algardis to the sculptors of Versailles, the Girardons, the Coisevoxes and the Bouchardons.

Concerning the homage which he undertook to render in sculpture to Venus, Renoir's plans are far from having been realized in their full scope. He wanted to treat the theme of the bas-relief entirely in the round, to make a complete ensemble of it, with fountains and architectural motifs. The whole was to be placed in the garden of the villa at Cagnes. But aside from the *Standing Venus*, the only part of the project which was completed was the head of Paris in the









round. It seems doubtful that a monument representing so lopsided a scene would be feasible - which may be the reason why Renoir abandoned the idea.

THE BUST OF PARIS AND THE
CLOCK PROJECTS — „One day,”
writes Vollard, speaking of a scene which took place
long before the sculpture period, „I found Gabrielle
(one of Renoir's favorite models) in the studio, with
a Phrygian bonnet on her head. „Look, Vollard, see
how much like a boy she looks. I've always wanted
to do a Paris, but I never could find a model.
What a statue of the Republic I could make of Gabri-
elle, a Republic with Paris' youth...”

Paris le 16 Jan 1914

Ch. Guino

*Renoir est arrivé. Paris
lui offre la pomme.
Si vous pouviez la terminer
ch. Guino, ce serait pour la
meilleure*

*Qui on
Vollard*

Gabrielle and her red bonnet were the starting point of a remarkable series of paintings and drawings on the theme of Paris offering the apple to Venus. As to the statue, it had remained in the realm of hope. Now that Renoir had the services of Guino, he could fruitfully go back to his old plan.

It was in 1915, at Cagnes, that Guino executed the figure which had been projected seven years earlier. It turned out to be a bust 26 inches (65 cm.) high, interesting in its movement, with a face crowned with curls, the head slightly bent, wearing the bonnet of liberty. Guino worked on it without a model, following an old drawing of Renoir's. An early version shows a beardless Paris; a revised version, made according to a rapid drawing sketched for the purpose, gives the shepherd a bit of fuzz on the upper lip and a fringe of beard under his chin. The piece is pleasant to look at, surely constructed, supple in movement. In it Renoir combines the idea of a figure of the Republic with that of a peaceful shepherd, smiling at life. Joining these two notions he proposes a mode of social existence which he dreamed of, but hardly dared to hope for.

All his works are hymns to life, hymns whose meaning generally remains vague. With the Clock Projects this meaning is expressed in precise terms. Homage is rendered to the Child, the symbol of perpetual rebirth; carrying a torch, king of a terrestrial globe which supports him, he also dominates the face of the clock which marks the time and the succession of generations. Man and Woman, his „progenitors,” acclaim him and delegate their powers to him.

Of this small monument, which is 30 inches (75 cm.) high, there are several versions, all unfinished, of which the last corrects the rather lifeless movement of the earlier ones. The idea of a clock obsessed Renoir for a long time. Each year there was another try, but the project was never carried through to completion. Guino worked on these at Cagnes and Paris, principally in 1915, 1916 and 1917. The initial inspiration came from two studies which were in the Vollard collection. An actor from the Théâtre de l'Odéon, a friend of Pierre Renoir, sometimes served as a model. These sketches are fairly conventional in composition, and not in the best taste; they fall into forms with the exaggerated curves and bulges, and the declamatory tone, which are the least valuable part of the heritage of the Baroque æsthetic.

THE GARLANDED MEDALLIONS —

Sarcastic as he might be with regard to false, mediocre or pretentious art, Renoir was generous in his admiration of works of quality. Hence, since he was practicing the technique which gives birth to monuments, he conceived the idea of doing honor to the talents of some of his precursors and contemporaries. The plan envisioned a series of medallions bearing the images of the artists of his preference. The name of the personage to be honored would be carved around the face, the frame would be a heavy garland of leaves and fruits: the diameter would invariably be 31 inches (80 cm.). Eugène Delacroix is shown with a strong mouth, and hair crushed down over his forehead. Renoir in his youth had a great admiration for Delacroix, attached himself to him and accepted his influence, at a time when the painter of the *Taking of Constantinople* and the *Barricade* was still held in suspicion almost everywhere else.

Dominique Ingres is seen full-face, with the broad collar of his cape framing his smooth-shaven face. He is the man of Renoir's „acid years,” the period of his career which has been called the „*crise ingriste*,” and which is praised to the skies by some and decried by others.

Camille Corot looks like an honest old artisan whose virtues Péguy might have sung. Renoir had copied certain of his landscapes, which are marvels of organization. „What I like so much about Corot,” he said, „is that he renders everything with a bit of tree.” The old master had sojourned at Essoyes, a fact which made the village all the dearer to Renoir. He had said to his young confrere (an observation which the latter retained piously): „One is never sure of what one has done outside: it must always pass through the studio.”

In addition to these medallions of Renoir's immediate precursors, three others were consecrated to associates who had fought beside him and were his friends.

Claude Monet is bald and wears a flowing beard. He is the man of the first hour, the combatant with unalterable courage, the soul of the Impressionist cenacle.

Paul Cézanne shows a bare scalp. He has tufts of hair behind the ears, and a short goatee. No one had more esteem for Cézanne, the painter of cubes and angles, than Renoir, the painter of curls and curves. „Renoir,” says Rivière, „was very attached to Cézanne, and spent some days, in 1886, I think, at Jas de Bouffan, the old family estate of the Cézannes. The ancient house, which had kept a nice eighteenth-century character about it, pleased Renoir immensely.” Finally there is Auguste Rodin, with a great forked beard, almost like the Moses of Michelangelo. His admirers made him a sort of god of sculpture. He came to visit Renoir from time to time, not without a certain degree of pomp; but the painter would express no opinion of his work, and certainly drew no inspiration from it for his own sculpture.

A seventh medallion stopped at the rough stage and lacked its garland. This one was consecrated to Wagner. It is probably lost, and not even a photograph of it has survived. It is hard to say why Wagner was to figure in this series of artists. Renoir used to say that „Bayreuth bored him,” and how could it be otherwise, given his taste for what is simple and clear? The musician is represented as Renoir painted him in 1882, with hair falling to his shoulders, chin whiskers, and a Windsor tie around his high collar. The oil portrait was painted in twenty minutes or thereabouts, one day when the painter and the composer, the latter in a great hurry, met in Palermo. Wagner was dissatisfied with the finished product: he complained that it gave him „the air of a Protestant minister.”

The choice of the artists represented should probably not be considered as very significant; it was determined not only by the painter's sympathy and admiration, but partly by the simple fact that he had certain documents at hand and lacked others.

All these medallions were modeled by Richard Guino in the Cagnes studio, from 1915 to 1917. The figures of Monet, Cézanne, Rodin and Wagner were taken from drawings or paintings which Renoir had done from life; that of Delacroix reproduced one of that artist's self-portraits; those of Ingres and Corot were taken from photographs.

The work is far from perfect. It is hurried and belongs to that of somewhat sketchy decoration, such as good garden ornamentation rather than to the domain of sculpture: it would go very nicely in a playground or a pergola. The play of reliefs is unsystematic, the physiognomies unstudied. As for the garlands, there is nothing about them to recall the luminous ordering, the precise harmony, of those of a Luca della Robbia. At best they might be compared with the work of an artist like Bernard Palissy, which is often messy, and is rescued, in Palissy's case, only by the quality of his enamel work.

THE MOTHER AND CHILD AND MADAME RENOIR — Madame Renoir died at Cagnes in 1915. The artist announced the event in a laconic note to Durand-Ruel: „My wife, sick already, came back from Gérardmer close to collapse. She was not able to get over it, and died yesterday, fortunately without knowing it. Your old friend, Renoir.”

Their sons, Pierre and Jean had both been seriously wounded in the war. Pierre, with a shattered arm, had been taken to the Carcassonne hospital, and Jean, with a buttock torn off, to the hospital at Gérardmer. Broken with fatigue and beside herself with anxiety, their mother had overtaxed her strength going from one to the other, and her death was the result.

Renoir wanted to raise a monument over the grave in the cemetery of Essoyes where she was laid to rest — a monument with nothing sad about it, for he thought of his wife as a woman in love, a diligent wife, a great-hearted mother. Renoir had given her a prominent place among his models (he painted her seated at the extreme left in the famous *Boaters' Picnic*). She was of the breed he loved, the breed of the lovely, carefree Parisian girls of the people. He married her in 1881, and his marriage, says Roger-Marx, „took him away gradually from elegant society.” She was not a „thinker,” as he called certain women whom he detested; she was of the intelligent flesh which knows how to live, to bloom, and to make everything about

it comfortable, agreeable and tasteful. One might have been surprised, Volland remarks, that Renoir, who was inclined to negligence and little concerned with the material side of things, had so well-kept a house, that his children were so well cared for, that his meals were always served on time. But the reason for this was clear once one had seen Madame Renoir watching over everything, even the brushes, which had to be properly washed and placed in varnished earthen vases, the pretty vases which she found in shop windows, and in which she arranged flowers with a knack so sure that Renoir used to say: „When my wife has made a bouquet, all I have to do is paint it.”

23 juillet 1915
 Mon cher Guimot
 Voulez-vous venir le
 plus tôt possible
 me retrouver à
 Essoyes. J'ai une
 étude représentant une
 femme, assise. Je
 voudrais que vous
 fassiez d'après ce
 tableau un buste
 en terre à modeler
 d'après copie du Vase
 Renoir

She saw painting (and this no doubt was wise) from a housekeeper's point of view. „Well, you know,” she once said, „when I came home yesterday, I said to myself, how dull the dining room is!... I had brought back three or four bits of canvas from Paris, some *Roses*, a *Head of Gabrielle*, things Renoir had worked on no more than an hour!

When I tacked them up on the wall, the room was changed. It was actually pleasant to be in.” „Madame Renoir,” adds Vollard, who reports these remarks, „said no more ; but I had never heard her talk so much about painting....”

In preparation for the projected monument, Renoir directed Guino to make a preliminary sketch 22 inches high (54 cm.). The piece was executed at Essoyes in 1916. The model was a canvas which Renoir had painted in 1885, and of which he made a replica in 1886. The scene has an adorable fleshly quality : in a garden in which reigns the heavy peace of a summer day, a stoutish little woman, who is Madame Renoir, sitting quietly, dressed plainly, freed from thought by her tranquil happiness, distractedly gives the breast, a plump breast swollen with milk, to a baby, likewise plump and swollen with milk, who is lying on his back and playing with his feet, voluptuously abandoned to his comfortable animal contentment. When his son Pierre, who was the child represented in the statue showed his father Guino's sketch, the aged Renoir, who was not easily given to tears, began to cry.

The sculpture does not have the warm intimacy of the painting ; it does not radiate the languorous peace which Renoir's brush had so well rendered. On the other hand it has an anonymous, somewhat abstract character conferred by the nature of the sculptural technique, but this does not go so far as to give it monumental grandeur. The work remains a charming statuette, surprising in its animation but lacking the style which would make it appropriate for a monument, even on a reduced scale. Hence the large statue was never executed. Only the best part of the piece - the head and bust - was repeated in larger dimensions, cast in bronze, and placed in the cemetery at Essoyes. A replica in polychromed cement was set up in the garden of the house at Cagnes where Aline Renoir had lived and ruled joyously over her household.

This replica, 24 inches high (60 cm.), partially executed after a painting by Renoir, is unfortunately not a success. One feels that the artist who worked on it was embarrassed by the effort to produce a likeness. The mass is heavy, the smile forced, the pose stiff.

Yet Renoir gave it his best efforts, and multiplied the sessions of work. In this instance he even went as far as to model with his own hands.



The polychroming of the statue grew out of a deep penchant in Renoir, the former porcelain painter - a penchant, however, which, despite his essays on Mac Lean cement, he never had an opportunity to satisfy fully. Had not the Greeks and the medieval sculptors colored some of their statues ? He had seen Maillol do sculpture in colors. Guino, too, was interested in it. Still impelled by the same desire, Renoir finally had a furnace built at the bottom of the garden of *Les Collettes*, which enabled him, just before his death, to make some experiments in ceramic. These beginnings were pursued for a short time after their father's death by Claude and Jean Renoir.

WATER AND FIRE — THE LARGE STOOPING WASHER WOMAN
Renoir's thoughts now turned to two large statues which would complement each other, one suggestive of *Fire*, the other of *Water*.





XXXIII - XXXIV - XXXV - XXXVI





In the country where he lived, the maritime and luminous Midi, water and fire are tangible realities of every day. They form the top and bottom of the landscape. Sun and sea now affront each other, now agree, now fight, now embrace, now repel, now absorb each other. Renoir had no use for heroics. He remained a common man. His Olympus was a garden in Burgundy or Provence and his gods were simple people. He would not imagine some tortuous and abstract symbolic homage to be offered to Fire and Water. A simple blacksmith heating the iron, a simple washerwoman scrubbing the laundry, clothed only in the majesty of life, would suffice to bring forth his thought, and to bring it forth nobly.



Several preliminary studies were made, on which Guino worked at Cagnes in 1916 and 1917. Renoir gave him the general handling of them by tracing a few sketchy drawings. The originals of these first sculptured studies were in terra cotta, about 14 inches high (35 cm.). They were then cast in plaster to be reworked. The changes made were no more than slight variants in the position of the forearms and hands. The blacksmith is sitting on a small stone. His youthful air, his long, curly hair, the loose garment which he wears over his shoulder, give him the appearance of a shepherd. Hence he has sometimes been called the *Young Shepherd*. In one hand he holds a hammer, with the other he is heating the iron in a small stove from which flames emerge. The back is rounded, the head bent forward and attentive; the movement is supple; the volumes are full and handled with ease.

The washerwoman is stooping, one knee on the ground, hands extended to draw from the water a cloth which falls back heavily. The face, beneath the thick hair which is pulled back and knotted on the nape of the neck, has a distracted, dreamy expression. The opulence of the flesh gives the masses a nice density.

When these studies were terminated, Guino undertook the roughing-out of the *Stooping Washerwoman* on a larger scale. This statue is sometimes called *The Bather*, sometimes *Water*. The work was done in 1917 at Cagnes, in the building which had been put at the far end of the garden and was intended for work in ceramic. At no time did Guino use a model; he was guided by the already completed small statue of the *Washerwoman*, by certain drawings of Renoir which later became Volard's property, by his inspiration of the moment and his fidelity to the æsthetic which he had bound himself to serve.

In its present state, even though unfinished (Renoir hardly intervened at all in its elaboration), the statue is beautiful and imposing. It surprises the spectator by its vigor and its wildness. The volumes have impressive fullness and density. This huge body, with its rounded shoulders, its wall-like bosom and its powerful buttocks, resembles a great rock, or some heavy Roman architecture. The two outstretched arms, bearing on the two columns formed by the wet linen (a sculptural find), look like two mighty buttresses. They foreshadow the „primitive” and arrogant forms which sculptors like Jacques Lipschitz and Henry Moore favor, and which define their abstract art. A head with fleshy, panting lips, a distracted look, a twitching nose, dominates this mass and completes the symphony of muscle and blood in which the cosmic and the animal blend with the human.

THE PROJECT OF A LARGE BLACKSMITH — GUINO'S DEPARTURE

Renoir hoped also to bring to completion a large *Blacksmith*, the image of *Fire*, as a pendant to the *Washerwoman*, image of *Water*.

To this end, Guino, in addition to the small sketches already made in terra cotta and plaster, made drawings after a model, in the scale of execution, and presented them to Renoir.

But Guino was growing weary of working as a subordinate and for another's benefit. Hence he was less and less flexible to deal with, while Renoir wanted a more and more complete submission from his collaborator. The painter, caught in this impasse, evaded the situation by retiring into his painting studio (there at least he was not dependent on anyone), and, in order to avoid friction, left Guino to figure things out alone or with Vollard in the ceramic studio at the end of the garden.

But the thought that someone was working in his name, as it were, and putting responsibilities on him over which he had no close control, soon became intolerable to Renoir. Moreover, the often noisy and sometimes quarrelsome interference of the woman who at that time was Guino's wife, and from whom he was soon to separate, did not help to maintain the equilibrium of a situation which of its nature was already particularly delicate. Renoir had a horror of any disagreement, even the slightest. Yet he could not bring himself to tell his assistant directly that he wanted an end to their increasingly difficult collaboration. Profiting by the presence in his home of Georges Besson and Albert André, two critics whom he esteemed and who, he knew, understood the awkwardness of the crisis, he pressed them to request Guino not to go on with the work in progress. The two emissaries carried out this mission the following day, December 27, 1918.

Thus the project of the *Large Blacksmith* was abandoned, and even the *Large Washerwoman*, beautiful as it was, did not get beyond the rough stage. That was the end of the brilliant and ephemeral Renoir-Guino collaboration: Guino never returned to Cagnes or Essoyes. Vollard, wholly absorbed by his publishing and his shop in the rue Laffitte, abandoned for good his role of intermediary between the two sculptors. As for Renoir, his age told more and more on him, and he became progressively less able to work at sculpture without assistance.

As soon as he left Renoir, Guino gave up the manner which had produced for him a number of astounding successes, and adopted a style which was colder and more decorative in spirit. As long as he was working at Renoir's side, however, and even when, not having sought the master's advice and assistance, he signed his own name to a piece, he used the technique which Renoir had suggested. Thus, among other things, he modeled heads of Jean and Claude Renoir (the first is particularly well done), a profile of Pierre Renoir's wife, Vera Sergine, and a bust of Auguste Renoir wearing a cap, which since then has been placed on the painter's tomb in the Essoyes cemetery.

On the eve of his death, Renoir, speaking to Albert André, explained how he came to sculpture and why he abandoned it. As usual, he minimized his own contribution. „It was this way.... If I tried to do some sculpture, it was not to annoy Michelangelo nor because painting no longer was enough for me, but because Monsieur Vollard gently put pressure on me. I had modeled a small medallion and a bust of my youngest son. Vollard then adroitly asked me to give some advice to a talented young sculptor, who might make something after one of my paintings. I went along with the idea, we made a little statuette; then, advice following advice, we made a large statue. But it's a Herculean art.... and you see how I am (referring to his feeble condition).... so I didn't continue.” Actually, with his sense of beauty and of real artistic values, Renoir had only had to touch a thing to set it in the right direction and produce a work of quality.

MOREL AND THE THREE TERRA COTTAS — GIMOND AND THE TEMPLE OF LOVE — For a number of years, a conscientious artisan of sculpture, Louis Morel, had spent his vacations in Essoyes, where he was born in 1887. There he met Renoir, whom he held in the highest respect. It took him a long time to approach the master, whom at first he saw only from afar. When Guino left, Morel offered to come to Renoir's assistance. Renoir listened with one ear only. They tried a couple of things,

however, and these were partially successful, although rather tentative, like Morel's work in general. Morel felt it an honor to be allowed to work for his illustrious colleague, and undertook his labors with the greatest application, humbly and not without timidity. Renoir scolded this new assistant violently, treated him rudely, teased him. Three high-reliefs came of this association, all of them about 24 inches high and 16 inches wide (60 x 40 cm.); they were done in terra cotta. Two of them represent a dancing girl with arms raised, shaking a tambourine; in the third, a shepherd leans against a tree trunk and plays a pipe. The themes came from drawings by Renoir. They are charming, discreet works, lacking sharpness of handling; one feels that the executant proceeded with prudence, hampered in his work by the fear of not doing well. Renoir would have liked more relief, always more relief, but this was not to Morel's taste. He obeyed, but reluctantly and without conviction. Had he been listened to, his forms would have been still less rounded and less clearly defined. To this Renoir replied that his dancers should be fattened like geese. In 1918, Renoir, desirous of continuing this collaboration, summoned Morel to Cagnes. There he began a new sculpture, a dancing figure wearing a wreath, but as Renoir's health was declining (at the time he was suffering from bronchitis), the work was not pursued. It is a moving fact that the very last sculptures of this old man, who was paralyzed and not far from his end, evoked music and the dance. The well-known sculptor Marcel Gimond, who at the time was twenty-three or twenty-four years old, saw a good deal of Renoir in the last three years of the latter's life. It was he who, after the master's death, assisted Renoir's sons in cataloguing the works of art which were in Cagnes, in Nice, and at the Boulevard Rochecouart apartment in Paris. (He did not make the Essoyes inventory.) In 1919, the year of Renoir's death, Gimond modeled a bust at Cagnes, after a prototype by his host; but he never worked under the latter's dictation. Renoir wanted Gimond to execute a *Temple of Love* after his drawings: it was to be about twelve feet (3 m. 50) in diameter, and was to stand in the garden of *Les Collettes*. The plan

called for a kind of hemicycle, similar to the *Temple of Love* in Versailles, with six columns, each terminating in a face, supporting a cupola. The *Venus Victorious* was to be placed in the center. Gimond tried to model two such columns: the sketches were cast in plaster, but were soon destroyed. The young sculptor was already, perhaps, too much of a personality to adapt himself to the conceptions of another artist, whoever it might be and however great his esteem for him. Furthermore, the project itself aroused little enthusiasm on his part, and he did not wish to devote his time to it.

Mon cher Morel
 Si par hasard vous avez
 le désir de venir de
 mon côté je vous
 offre l'hospitalité et
 pour le voyage je vous
 envoie tout en pain
 pour le sculpteur
 je dirai à votre
 la passer bien vite
 Bien à vous
 Camille
 Cagnes 31 septembre
 1918

All these attempts at collaboration, after the one with Guino, show how difficult it was to attain the necessary meeting of minds. They also indicate Guino's mastery in fulfilling the role which was his.

More than any other contemporary art, the Renoir-Guino sculpture is due, not to the work of a single person and a single thought, but to a bundle of individual efforts and to a tradition. Aristide Maillol, a great admirer of Renoir, is the connecting link between the spirit of the French painter and that of Greek sculpture.

Guino, Maillol's great admirer, assimilated something of the knowledge and convictions of his master. Ambroise Vollard here represents the French taste, measure, and critical sense, a penetrating comprehension which harmonizes and stimulates; Richard Guino, the spirit of assimilation and craftsmanly competence, deftness and joy of work; Auguste Renoir, the initial creative impulse. In an already rich and coherent synthesis, he is the element of spark, the unifying power, the part of genius.

Why should all this be surprising? Every work is really the product of such combinations, and in this case the amalgam is merely more apparent than usual. Yet we are in a definitely characterized circle: the composite whole flowers in the French atmosphere, and appears essentially as a creation of the French spirit and the French collectivity.

A team, we might say, is at work here, guided by a common „center of interest,” and made possible by a community of interests, half material, half spiritual.



The sociability of the host of *Les Collettes* has much to do with this. Vollard, Maillol, Guino, Morel and Gimond were guests at Cagnes and Essoyes. They dined and lodged together, exchanging their ideas and discoveries. Renoir was no lover of solitude.

He needed to feel around him the presence of active, enterprising people. This was his way of keeping in form and remaining, despite his confinement to a wheelchair, in contact with the life which he loved so much and which threatened to escape him.

It may be well, however, to say once more that this sculpture, in spite of the many who contributed to it - and Guino first of all - is essentially Renoir's work. Was he not the leader of the team, the one who conceived, commanded, approved or rejected? Even if Guino was more than an interpreter, even if at times he enlightened the artist who was inspiring him, the fact that he had initiative, that he was an excellent craftsman, does not make him more than a craftsman. No one refuses to attribute the *Requiem* to Mozart alone, though the finishing touches were put to it by his pupil Susmeyer, or to consider *Capital* as exclusively the work of Karl Marx because his friend Engels worked on it. Yet these interventions in the fields of music and literature are as important as Guino's in the field of sculpture.

Guino's relation to Renoir is that of an artist-executant to the *maître d'œuvre*, the planner and supervisor. Quite true, the activity of the executant here is not mechanical and sterile, as it generally is in our time, but friendly and inventive, as it was in the days of fruitful collaborations. „Renoir has been reproached,” says Waldemar Georges, „for his working method. It has been insinuated that the assistant's share was preponderant in the production of his statues. The prejudice in favor of manual labor, which is so deep rooted in the minds of our contemporaries, makes them forget that neither the sculptured temples of India, nor the Egyptian sphinxes, nor the portals of the Gothic cathedrals, are the manual products of the master artists who designed them. Among the windows of the cathedral of Chartres there is one, the gift of the guild of stone carvers, which represents the *maître d'œuvre*, his head wreathed in laurel, directing the work of a number of cutters who are carving a statue lying on the ground. This example borrowed from the past proves once more that Renoir was following tradition.”









There could be no more fecund method than to share the work of conception and of execution, when, by a miracle, circumstances were favorable and the men suited each other. On one side the creator keeps his freshness of vision, not becoming lost in difficulties of detail: on the other, the executant joyfully allows himself to be led, without having to ask himself every minute whether he is following the way of sound creation.

This, moreover, if we take Vollard's word for it, was Renoir's own view. „It's as if there was a hand at the tip of my cane," Vollard reports him as saying. „To do good work, you must not be too close. When you have your nose against the clay, how can you tell what you're doing?"

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PAINTER-SCULPTORS— Painting and sculpture are sister arts. There is no painting without perception and interpretation of volumes, without a keen and knowledgeable contact with the sculptural mass of things. Whether he paints „in chiaroscuro" or „in color planes," the painter must think volumes, either to dominate or to exclude them. Change the angle of vision, and drawing in surface becomes drawing in space.

Renoir is not the only one who made this transition. He did what many another manipulator of forms had done before him, from Leonardo to Michelangelo and El Greco, from Alonso Cano to Quentin Metsys. The thing happens today as well as in the past. Constantin and Maillol were renegades from painting, late in their careers. Painters like Daumier and Gauguin tried their hands at sculpture exactly as Renoir did, but with less good fortune. Degas is incomparable as the sculptor of unexpected attitudes. During the very years when Renoir was being carried from his bed to Guino's modeling stand, Rik Wouters, also stricken with a sickness which was soon to end his days, went with the utmost ardor from his striking work with the brush to sculpture of exceptional vitality. His is essentially the most animated, and probably the most durable,

work produced by the Impressionist sculptors. Between the statuary of the young Malines artist and that of the patriarch of Cagnes (to which might be added that of Ferdinand Schirren, another painter who did sculpture of high quality) there were certain incontestable analogies: a restrained lyricism, the novelty of the postures, the vigor and terseness of the treatment, the ennobling of everyday figures and actions. Other painters after Renoir have exchanged the brush for the chisel, though generally without attaining the brilliant results realized by Degas, Renoir and Rik Wouters. One might mention, among the most celebrated, Matisse and Picasso, who produced some surprising work, Modigliani, La Fresnaye, Derain, Braque, and Permeke.



Is there any other reason besides the pleasure of handling forms, the pleasure of the play which, for some, becomes the superior play of art, for the incursions into the field of sculpture by present-day painters? Gischia and Védres propose an explanation in which æsthetics is mingled with history and psychology. In their view, the avant-garde painter, the revolutionary, becomes impatient, because of either his devotion to a living tradition or his need of total novelty, when he sees

sculpture lagging far behind the new conquests and passionate explorations of painting. In order, then, to hasten the renovation of sculpture, the painter, who is master of a technique which allows fantasy and rapidity, transposes his anxieties and his inventions into sculpture, a slow, heavy technique, by way of blazing the trail for others.

„The invasion of the painters into the realm of sculpture,” say these writers, „is not, therefore, explained by a traditional mutual affinity of the two arts, but by a need felt by artists at a very precise moment, the need of finding out what would result, not from the application of their own style and treatment to a new technique, but from the idea which guided their researches, the principle of their revolution.”

Hence the role of these outsiders in the field of sculpture may, in a time of disintegration and renovation like our own, become a capital influence — as did the Renoir-Guino sculpture — on the destinies of the statuary art.

CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE OF RENOIR'S SCULPTURE — The essential purpose in discussing Renoir's sculpture comprehensively was to give as complete a document as possible on what was perhaps the best of contemporary sculpture in France. The first purpose of this discussion was, therefore, to throw light on a well-defined point of history, leaving aside its historical significance, on which varied judgments are possible.

As to whether this art should be proposed as an example to be followed, this is another problem, and one to which no satisfactory answer can be given until the characteristics of this art have been determined, and its place in the general current, the living evolution of sculpture, defined.

From whatever side Renoir is approached, it is surprising to find how much this promoter of a new painting, whom many considered a dangerous revolutionary, was opposed to any adventurous step (on this point all those who knew him agree); how much he was attached to tradition, and how suspicious of what

was called „progress.” He went so far as to speak of his „hatred” of Impressionism, and said his great discovery was that the only valid teaching is to be found in the museums.

„There are people,” he said, „who like what is new : I like what is old. I like the old, joyous frescoes, the antique faïences, and tapestries mellowed by time....” Like his great friend Cézanne, he wants above all to be classical. He has a horror of the machine age, of speed, of democracy, of Pointillism. Manifestly he would have been nauseated at Cubism and Surrealism. In him there is the great simplicity which must have been in La Fontaine, in Molière, and which makes him perceive at a glance, and reject without ado, anything that is theory-ridden, involuntarily or deliberately trumped up, artificial or cute, anything that does not abandon itself with joy and passion to the deep, slow movement of nature and the spirit. His taste is for life without frills, life in direct contact with the earth, for flowers and fruits and the air and pretty women, for easy rhythms, for an art accessible to everybody. This is the basic character of his genius.

„A people,” he once said, „should not appropriate what is not part of its own heritage : it would make a big mistake if it did. The speedy result would be a sort of universal art, without a distinctive physiognomy.” And again : „There's nothing so fine as a little air of Couperin or Grétry, or anything else of the old French music. There's good design !”

It is not surprising, therefore, that with these leanings he should be, in sculpture, the follower of the Greeks and Romans, of Algardi and Cellini, of Girardon and Goujon, of the sculptors of Versailles, of Coisevox and Bouchardon. In this art he likes the order and balance, the submission to nature, the perfect visibility. But he does not repeat; he speaks out of the abundance of his heart, free — no one could be freer — of any spirit of archaism. In a word, he belongs to the excellent French group of modern classicists, of neo-classicists, which includes Bourdelle, Bernard, Despiau, Maillol, Pompon — honest artisans, solid craftsmen, in perfect harmony with life, attached to „verisimilitude,” striving for monumentality. Much calmer

than Rodin (Rodin's sculpture is dynamic, Renoir's essentially static), less pompous and decorative than Bourdelle, Renoir as a sculptor has neither the subtleties of Despiau nor the tranquil nobility of Maillol. But none of them has his fundamental vitality, his beautiful and particular savagery, his aggressiveness. Judged by his best works, his *Venus Victorious*, his *Large Washerwoman*, he is the least conventional, the least predictable of the group, the one whose sculptural language has the most effectiveness and mordacity.



It may be asked whether the sculptors of Renoir's group, friends of tradition, enemies of academicism, took the best way of arriving at the „modern classicism,” so longed for by the most ardent modernists. This is doubtful. Are we not witnessing the birth of a new plastic language that, embryonic as it still is, already seems elliptical, magical, and accepts the real only as transposed, as it was in the art of the Egyptians and the Byzantines? And is it not more important to induce and hasten this difficult birth than to retard the disappearance of an æsthetic which seems doomed to death?

The danger of neo-classicism, as we now see it, is an excessive fidelity to nature, which hampers the most

fruitful creative faculties of the artist. Maillol himself puts his finger on this danger when, with the honesty which is characteristic of him, he says: „The hard thing is to escape from nature.... Nature is deceptive; if I looked at her less, I would produce not the real but the true.... One must be synthetic, must, like the Negro sculptors, reduce twenty forms to one....”

Renoir, however, saves himself by a vigorous, astonishing ingenuity. He instills new life into the tradition, but without thinking about it, drawing out of himself in all its freshness the virgin strength which has animated the living tradition throughout the centuries. Hence his forms speak by themselves, independently of what they represent, at times foreshadowing (notably in the *Large Washerwoman*) the future researches of abstract art led by Lipschitz and Laurens, and reaching back in its best moments (for instance with the *Venuses*) to the primitive, prehistoric, Mexican statuary. If, however, he foreshadows abstract sculpture, it goes without saying that he does so without knowing it, and that he probably would not admit it, somewhat as Cézanne, another „classicist,” opens the way to Cubism and the painters of extreme saturation.

Apart from the trend which he illustrates - the trend toward the rejuvenation of traditional sculpture - there is in Renoir an intensity and an elevated tone, which connect him with the best art of all times and places, transcending the diversity of styles, whether primitive, in full flower or decadent. This intensity, a gluttonous quality which purposes to encompass every possibility, which reconciles them all and binds them together, is a lesson for every artist and every art.

In Renoir's final projects there is perhaps an indication which has not only æsthetic but also social value for the world of tomorrow. In the painting of his old age - his red period - there is incontestably a certain vagueness, a liquefaction of the forms. (How far we are from the „Ingresque” period!) But his sculpture escapes this defect, due, quite clearly, to the young ardor of his assistant. Renoir had always had the feeling and passion for solid forms, but now it was Guino who enabled him to express what he had always felt so strongly.

But there is something else in his sculpture, something that there never was in his painting : a sense of the perennial, of the general, of the monumental. The interlocking of volumes alone (look once again at the *Venus Victorious* and the *Large Washerwoman*) bespeaks an underlying organization, an initial construction. Perhaps it was his will to attain an absolute which moved him also to treat certain general themes, to conceive „monuments to life” : Is not the *Venus Victorious*, standing on its base in which the scene of her election is represented / the *Venus* which so many artists and critics consider one of the finest, if not the finest, achievements of French sculpture in our time / is she not a final and solemn homage tendered to woman ? Are not the *Clock Projects* a glorification of life as it is continually reborn in the child ? Are not the medallions a homage to art, the most refined means of expression which man has at his disposal ? Is not the *Monument to Madame Renoir* a homage to maternity ? And are not the twin statues of *Water* and *Fire* a homage to the whole creation ?

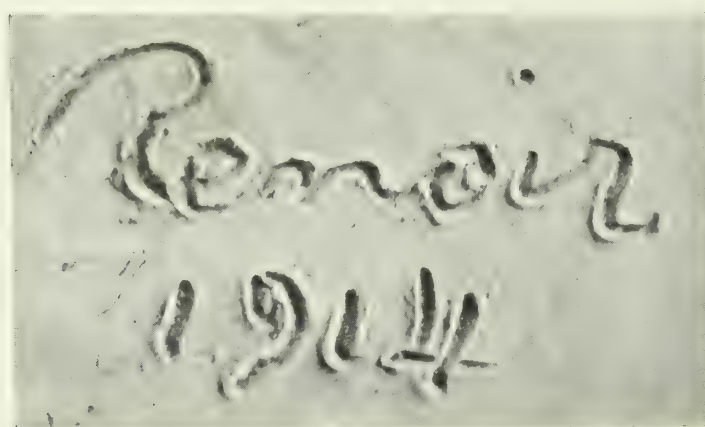
These final aspirations are a fitting crown to Renoir’s career. It is only to be regretted that he was unable to push the projects to completion ; for with the possible exception of the *Venus Victorious* we have only unfinished monuments. In general they are no more than noble intentions which tell us what an exceptional sculptor Renoir would have been if he had been granted a new life.

While Renoir showed a tendency toward the monumental in his sculpture, as the very nature of the art would compel him to, he did not abandon his old taste for the simple and familiar. He honors art by giving us the images of his friends. He finds a theme through which to glorify maternity in his own house. He chooses a serving woman to represent *Water* and a workingman to represent *Fire*. And he calls upon his all-time model, the child-woman, fat, unreflecting, happy, primitive, almost animal, but embodying for him the image of the fecundity and muteness of the earth, to stand for the *Venus Victorious*, to express, by the solidity and balance of her volumes, the beauty of forms in space.











CATALOGUE OF THE SCULPTURES OF AUGUSTE RENOIR

1 COCO

Medallion. Diameter 8 1/2 in. (22 cm.). Executed in 1907. Signed „Renoir” at the bottom of the figure, to the left. Not dated. Published by Hodebert, Paris, and Flechtheim, Berlin. The head of a child with long hair, seen in profile. The model is Renoir’s youngest son, Claude. The work is entirely by Renoir’s hand. Carved in white marble, the medallion was set into the fireplace of the dining room of *Les Collettes* at Cagnes.

Illustration plate III. Comment page 19.

2 COCO

Bust. Height 11 in. (27 cm.). Executed in 1908. Signed „Renoir” on the left above the base. Not dated. Published by Hodebert, Paris, and Flechtheim, Berlin. The head of a child with hair cut in bangs, done in wax, with Renoir’s son Claude as model. The work is entirely Renoir’s.

Illustration plates IV and XXXVI. Comment page 20.

3 SMALL STANDING VENUS

Height 24 in. (60 cm.). Executed in the summer of 1913. Signed „Renoir” at the back of the base. Not dated. Published by Vollard, Paris. Nude figure, standing with the weight on the right leg, holding a drape in the left hand and in the right an apple. The theme is Venus, or Aphrodite, who is elected more beautiful than her sister goddesses Hera and Athene, by Paris, shepherd son of Priam, and awarded the golden apple in symbol of victory. Executed by Richard Guino, on order from Vollard, after a drawing by Renoir which is in the Vollard collection, and under Renoir’s direction. The original head, in wax, is preserved in Guino’s studio.

Illustration plates V-VII. Comment page 24.

4 VARIANT

OF THE SMALL STANDING VENUS
Height 6 1/2 in. (16 cm.). Probably executed in 1913. Signed „Renoir” at the back of the base. Not dated. Head modeled entirely by Renoir in earth from the

garden of *Les Collettes*. Differs from the head of the *Small Standing Venus* principally in the movement of the hair.

Illustration plates VIII and IX. Comment page 24.

5

SMALL JUDGMENT OF PARIS

Bas-relief. Height 5 in. : width 8 in. (12 x 19 cm.). Executed in 1915. Unsigned and undated. Unpublished. Paris, wearing a Phrygian bonnet, kneeling on one knee, has just handed the apple to Venus, who is accompanied by Hera and Athene. In the sky above Paris a winged Hermes, carrying the caduceus, is seen. This plaque in very low relief was intended to adorn the base of the *Small Standing Venus*. It was executed in Paris by Richard Guino after the photograph of a drawing made by Renoir in 1908, when he also did a painting on the same theme. This is only a small preliminary sketch made to be executed in larger dimensions. The original wax is preserved in Guino's studio.

Comment page 26.

6

LARGE STANDING VENUS

or

VENUS VICTORIOUS

Height 71 in. : width 43 in. (180 x 110 cm.). Executed from early 1915 through to 1916. Signed „Renoir” on the flat of the base, behind the right foot of the figure. Dated, almost illegibly, 1916. Published by Vollard, Paris. An enlarged version of the *Small Venus*. Nude, weight resting on the right leg, holding a drape in the left hand (the folds have been changed) and the apple in the right. The work was done on order from Ambroise Vollard. Guino executed it under Renoir's guidance, working from the *Small Venus* and some new sketches made by Renoir for the purpose. Two copies of the head of this statue were cast in a special mortar and polychromed.

Illustration plates XIV-XXI. Comment page 24.

7

LARGE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

High-relief. Height 30 in. : width 36 in. (73 x 91 cm.). Executed in 1916. Signed „Renoir” in lower left. Dated 1916. Published by Vollard, Paris. The theme and placement of the figures is the same as in the *Small Judgment of Paris*. Executed by Guino on Vollard's order and under Renoir's guidance, the work follows the small sketch and the 1908 drawing, with the difference that the figure is inspired by the two *Standing Venuses* already executed in the round.

Illustration plates X-XIII. Comment page 26.

8

PARIS (beardless)

also called

THE REPUBLIC

Bust. Height 26 in. : width 22 in. (65 x 55 cm.). Executed in 1915. Published by Vollard, Paris. Half-length figure, wearing a Phrygian bonnet. A drape, knotted on the right shoulder, falls down the back and over the chest. The piece is a study which was to be part of a complete *Judgment of Paris* in the round. Richard Guino did the work on order from Vollard and under Renoir's direction, without a model, following a sketch of Renoir.

Illustration plate XXXIII. Comment page 27.

9

PARIS (bearded)

also called

THE REPUBLIC

Bust. Height 26 in. : width 22 in. (65 x 55 cm.). Executed in 1915. Published by Vollard, Paris. Same theme and treatment as the beardless Paris described above, except for the beard and mustache. Executed by Guino for Vollard, under Renoir's direction.

Illustration plates XXXIV and XXXVII. Comment page 27.

CLOCK PROJECTS

Height 30 in. : width 21 in. : depth 9 1/2 in. (75 x 53 x 24 cm.). Date of the specimen reproduced, 1914, which date appears on the back of the base with the signature „Renoir.” Published by Vollard, Paris. A nude man and woman, standing, with drapes over their shoulders, render homage to a child seated on a terrestrial globe and holding a torch. Beneath the globe and between the two figures is a hollow intended to receive the face and works of a clock. There are at least two versions of this project, neither of them finished, executed by Guino between 1914 and 1917, in Paris and Cagnes. The executant worked from a rapid drawing and several sketches by Renoir, the latter belonging to the Vollard collection.

Illustration plate XXII. Comment page 27.

11

DOMINIQUE INGRES

Medallion. Diameter 31 in. (80 cm.). Executed 1915-1917. Signed in lower left, undated. Published by Vollard, Paris. Head of Ingres surrounded by garland of foliage and fruits. Guino executed it after a photograph of Ingres.

Illustration plate XXXI. Comment page 28.

12

AUGUSTE RODIN

Medallion. Diameter 31 in. (80 cm.). Executed 1915-1917. Signed „Renoir” in lower left. Not dated. Published by Vollard, Paris. Head surrounded by a garland of foliage and fruits. Done by Guino after a portrait of Rodin drawn by Renoir.

Illustration plates XXVII and XXX. Comment page 28.

13

CAMILLE COROT

Medallion. Diameter 31 in. (80 cm.). Executed 1915-1917. Signed „Renoir” in lower left. Not dated.

Published by Vollard, Paris. Head surrounded by a garland of leaves and fruits. Guino executed it after a photograph of Corot.

Illustration plate XXIII. Comment page 28.

14

EUGENE DELACROIX

Medallion. Diameter 31 in. (80 cm.). Executed 1915-1917. Signed „Renoir” on the left sleeve of the subject. Not dated. Published by Vollard, Paris. Head surrounded by a garland of fruits and foliage. Executed by Guino after the reproduction of a self-portrait of Delacroix.

Illustration plate XXIV. Comment page 28.

15

CLAUDE MONET

Medallion. Diameter 31 in. (80 cm.). Executed 1915-1917. Signed „Renoir” in lower left. Not dated. Published by Vollard, Paris. Head surrounded by garland of fruits and leaves. Executed by Guino after a portrait of Monet drawn by Renoir.

Illustration plate XXV. Comment page 28.

16

PAUL CEZANNE

Medallion. Diameter 31 in. (80 cm.). Executed 1915-1917. Signed „Renoir” on left sleeve of the subject. Not dated. Published by Vollard, Paris. Head surrounded by a garland of foliage and fruits. The source of Guino's inspiration was a pastel of Cézanne by Renoir. A bronze copy of this work was placed as a memorial on a wall above a fountain in Aix-en-Provence, where Cézanne lived and worked.

Illustration plate XXVI. Comment page 28.

17

MOTHER AND CHILD

Height 22 in. (54 cm.). Executed in 1916. Signed „Renoir” at the bottom of the statue on the right. Not dated. Published by Hodebert, Paris, and Flecht-heim, Berlin. The group portrays Madame Renoir, wearing a broad-brimmed straw hat and a long skirt,

seated and nursing her first baby, Pierre. Executed by Richard Guino for and under the direction of Renoir, after a painting by Renoir, done in 1885, and a replica made in 1886. This was intended as a study for a large statue to be placed on Madame Renoir's tomb at Essoyes. The large statue was never executed : only the head was rendered in larger dimensions (see below, No. 18), and two other copies were made of the head in enameled ceramic.

Illustration plate XXXII. Comment page 29.

18

MADAME RENOIR

Bust. Height 24 in. (60 cm.) without the base ; 32 in. (80 cm.) with the base. Executed in 1916. Unsigned and undated. Unpublished. Madame Renoir is represented wearing a hat with wide, dipping brim, adorned with two large roses. Guino worked on the bust at Essoyes, for and under the guidance of Renoir, taking his inspiration from the *Mother and Child* and from the 1885 painting. A bronze copy was placed on Madame Renoir's tomb in the cemetery at Essoyes, and a copy in mortar, polychromed by the *al fresco* process, was set up in the garden of the village at Cagnes, now the property of Claude Renoir.

Illustration plate XXXV. Comment page 30.

19

FIRE

or the

SMALL BLACKSMITH

also called

THE YOUNG SHEPHERD

Height 14 in. : width 11 in. (35 x 28 cm.). Executed in 1916. Signed „Renoir” on the left side of the base. Not dated. Published by Vollard, Paris. A young smith with long hair, a cloth thrown over his shoulder, is seated on a low stone, holding a hammer in the right hand and dipping the iron in a small round firepot with his left. The piece, of which there are several versions, one of them in terra cotta, was executed

by Guino on Vollard's order, after a sketch by Renoir and under his direction. The work was intended as a study for a larger statue which was never executed, but for which Guino made sketches which are extant. Illustration plates XXVIII and XLIII. Comment page 31.

20

WATER

or the

SMALL STOOPING WASHER WOMAN

also called

THE SMALL BATHER

Height 14 in. (35 cm.). Executed in 1916. Signed „Renoir” on the right side of the base. Not dated. Published by Vollard, Paris. A woman, bent over with one knee on the ground, is dipping linen into the water. There are several versions of this piece, the first in terra cotta ; they were made by Guino at Cagnes, on Vollard's order and under Renoir's direction. Several copies were made in plaster, to be reworked in preparation for the rendering of the statue in larger dimensions.

Illustration plate XXIX. Comment page 31.

21

WATER

or the

LARGE STOOPING WASHER WOMAN

also called

THE LARGE BATHER

Height 48 in. : length 53 in. : width 22 in. (123 x 135 x 55 cm.). Executed in 1917. Signed on the left of the base. Not dated. Published by Vollard, Paris. The theme and treatment are the same as in the *Small Washerwoman* described above. The statue was done by Guino at Cagnes, on Vollard's order and under Renoir's guidance, following sketches made by Renoir, and drawings which later were turned over to Vollard.

Illustration plates XXXVIII-XLII. Comment page 31.

DANCER WITH A TAMBOURINE I

High-relief in terra cotta. Height 23 in. : width 16 in. (58 x 41 cm.). Executed in 1918. Original plaster not signed : terra cotta replicas signed „Renoir” at the foot of the figure. Not dated. Published by Renou and Colle, Paris. A nude woman, dancing, with her arms outspread, holds a tambourine in her left hand. On the background a garland is fixed by two points. The work was executed at Essoyes by Louis Morel, under Renoir's direction and on his order. It was inspired by a painting of Renoir, done in 1915, which belonged to the Hodebert collection in Paris. Illustration plate XLIV. Comment page 33.

DANCER WITH A TAMBOURINE II

High-relief in terra cotta. Height 23 in. : width 16 in. (58 x 41 cm.). Executed in 1918. Original plaster unsigned : signature „Renoir” scratched on the terra

cotta at the feet of the figure. Undated. Published by Renou and Colle, Paris. A nude woman dances, striking a tambourine. Fluted columns at left and right. Louis Morel executed the relief at Essoyes, for Renoir and under his direction. He followed a sketch which Renoir made at that time.

Illustration plate XLVI. Comment page 33.

PIPE PLAYER

High-relief in terra cotta. Height 23 in. : width 16 in. (58 x 41 cm.). Executed in 1918. Original plaster unsigned : signature „Renoir” scratched on the terra cotta in lower left. Undated. Published by Renou and Colle, Paris. A shepherd with long hair, wearing a cloak, leans on a tree trunk and plays a pipe. Fluted columns at left and right. Executed by Morel for and under the direction of Renoir, after a drawing made by Renoir at that time.

Illustration plates XLV and XLVII Comment page 33.

LIST OF PLATES

Auguste Renoir / Photograph	I
Madame Renoir / Painting by Renoir	II
Coco / Medallion	III
Bust of Coco	IV
Small Standing Venus	V-VII
Variant of the Small Standing Venus	VIII-IX
Large Judgment of Paris	X-XIII
Large Standing Venus (Venus Victorious)	XIV-XXI
Clock project	XXII
Camille Corot / Medallion	XXIII
Eugène Delacroix / Medallion.	XXIV
Claude Monet / Medallion	XXV
Paul Cézanne / Medallion	XXVI
Auguste Rodin / Medallion	XXVII
Fire or Small Blacksmith	XXVIII
Water or Small Stooping Washerwoman	XXIX
Auguste Rodin / Medallion	XXX
Dominique Ingres / Medallion	XXXI
Mother and Child	XXXII
Bust of Paris (beardless)	XXXIII
Bust of Paris (bearded)	XXXIV
Bust of Madame Renoir	XXXV
Bust of Coco	XXXVI
Bust of Paris (bearded) / Detail	XXXVII
Water or Large Stooping Washerwoman	XXXVIII-XLII
Fire or Small Blacksmith	XLIII
Dancer with a Tambourine I	XLIV
Pipe player / Detail	XLV
Dancer with a Tambourine II	XLVI
Pipe player	XLVII
Renoir's signature	XLVIII

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